

studied them long and hard. I am distressed that today our kids and grandkids don't take the humanities courses in college that we took, which brought us a real knowledge of the underpinnings of the philosophy of our government, our society, our civilization.

Our students today are caught up in all kinds of studies of minorities of one kind or another and in other fads of the day. They are not as well educated about the traditional concepts. In fact, some even assault these concepts as inapplicable to today's world, when in point of fact, the lessons of the great philosophers are totally applicable. You will find philosophers on every side of every issue. If you study them well, you will appreciate and understand the problems of today, the kinds of choices we should be making in our society today.

History is relevant and, as has been noted many times, those who ignore history are bound to repeat it. That was said in the context of the bad times of history—primarily the wars that have to be fought—because we don't understand that history. So a better education provides better citizenship.

It can provide stronger values because we study the great books and the philosophers who wrestled with the questions of what is the meaning of life and how we should conduct ourselves. There is a difference between right and wrong. There are truths and there are values. Young people today are not reminded that in the Declaration of Independence, our founders said there are "inalienable rights," and "we hold these truths to be self-evident." There were some things that are so true and we understand that. They were self-evident. But today, relativism has begun to teach our kids that there is no real truth, there is no definite right and wrong; there are only shades of gray.

If society comes to believe that and bases decisions upon that misunderstanding, then we cannot long survive as a free society, as a society founded on the principle that there are certain truths, and that part of those truths that are given to us by our Creator—not by some government. We then begin to rely upon government to do things because it is the benevolence of government that is the basis for our rights. Wrong. Government doesn't give us any rights. The best we can expect from government is the protection of our God-given rights. But if generations are not taught that, then we won't be able to make public decisions on the same foundation that our Founding Fathers understood were so important to future generations.

A reduction in crime. If we have a well-educated citizenry, we are going to have less crime. I think it is absolutely wrong to believe that people

from disadvantaged backgrounds have to be relegated to a life of crime, that they somehow aren't as capable as everybody else at learning and improving their lives and staying free from a life of crime. It is so at odds with the fundamental precepts of our country that I can't believe people would still expect less of students in these kinds of communities.

Our proposal, as the Presiding Officer noted, is to recognize that everybody is entitled to an equal opportunity for education, and we cannot expect less of those in our most distressed areas. But if we don't give them the same opportunity to go to areas where they can get a good education and have safe schools that provide a quality education, then we are, in effect, saying: You are second class, you just can't make it, and we are not going to bother to give you the tools to make it. That is fundamentally wrong and un-American.

Finally, a good education—if we get it right—will allow for more personal fulfillment. We all want to make the very best of our God-given talents, to do the very best we can in life, because most of us, toward the end of our lives, begin reflecting on why we are here and what was so important about our life and what we want to leave behind.

We speak in terms of legacies. The reality is that most of us begin saying, well, did we make the most of what we had? We all have wonderful talents given to us, and we feel very good about ourselves and our lives if we have been able to take advantage of those talents, if we have fulfilled our expectations. Yet we know today we are not challenging our young students as much as we could be. It is a crime to me that we don't challenge them to the ultimate, the maximum, so they can make the most of what God has given them. We fail them if we don't do that. If we are so lazy and so wrong about the way we provide an educational opportunity that we don't challenge them to be the very best they can be, that is the worst thing we can do for our young people today. That is why I said if we get education right, everything else will follow in our society, and that is why I think it is the most important thing we can do.

I was asked by a journalist: If you could do one thing in public policy as a member of the Federal Government, what would it be? I said: Well, other than ensuring our national security, which we have to put that first because that is the difference between life and death for all of our people, I would allow real choice in education so that people would be able to go to the place where they thought they could get the best education for their kids wherever that might be, and that the Federal Government not stand in the way of the exercise of that choice. And the very exercise of that choice would en-

sure a quality education and a safe education because the people who provide the education would have to rise to the challenge. They would have to understand that they would no longer be in business if people didn't come to them. If students didn't come, they wouldn't be able to educate. But if they did a good job, the students would come. It can be done.

I visited a school district in Arizona not long ago—the Alhambra School District—not a wealthy school district. There are a lot of minorities there. Carol Peck is the superintendent. She told me there are 39 different languages and dialects spoken at that school. Yet they have achievement at that school because they have innovative administrators and teachers and the kids learn.

We can learn lessons from that if we will allow innovation at the local level—if we will not bind them by all of these Federal rules and regulations. If we will lay those aside and at least let the small amount of Federal money that goes to local schools be used in an innovative way, we will begin to remove the barriers to innovation, and we will provide quality education for our kids.

As I said in the beginning, just like welfare reform, we can succeed if we will just throw off the old ideas and allow innovation to prosper at the local level and at the parental level—and among our teachers, who, after all, are on the front lines of this wonderful opportunity we have.

I appreciate the indulgence of the Chair. I thought since we had a little extra time I would embellish a little bit on the remarks I made.

I thank the Presiding Officer for setting aside this time for us to focus on this particular subject, and for the great job he has done over the many months in which he has been in charge in the effort to take some morning business time like this so we can all express ourselves on subjects that we are about to debate. I think the upcoming education debate is the most important debate we can engage in as a Senate.

#### RECESS

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate stand in recess until 1 p.m. today.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 11:43 a.m., recessed until 1:02 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. KYL).

#### EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report S. 2.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2) to extend programs and activities under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.